

WHAT IS CLAIMED IS:

1. An image input apparatus comprising:
conversion means for converting an image signal into digital information;
encryption means for encrypting the digital information by using an encryption key; and
erasing means for erasing said encryption key after the digital information has been encrypted.

2. An image input apparatus according to claim 1, wherein said encryption means encrypts the digital information which has undergone a high-efficiency coding operation.

3. An image input apparatus according to claim 1, further comprising image pick-up means for optically picking up an image of a subject and for generating an image signal from the picked-up image.

4. An image input apparatus according to claim 1, further comprising means for inputting said encryption key from an external source.

5. An image input apparatus according to claim 1,

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further comprising means for generating said encryption key within said image input apparatus.

6. An image input apparatus according to claim 1, wherein said encryption key comprises an encryption key based on a common key cryptosystem.

7. An image input apparatus according to claim 1, wherein said encryption key comprises an encryption key based on a public key cryptosystem.

8. An image input apparatus according to claim 1, further comprising means for inputting from an external source another encryption key for encrypting said encryption key.

9. An image input apparatus according to claim 8, wherein said encryption key comprises an encryption key based on a common key cryptosystem, and said other encryption key comprises an encryption key based on a public key cryptosystem.

10. An image input method comprising the steps of:
converting an image signal into digital information;
encrypting the digital information by using an

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encryption key; and

erasing said encryption key after the digital information has been encrypted.

11. An image input method according to claim 10, wherein the digital information which has undergone a high-efficiency coding operation is encrypted.

12. An image input method according to claim 10, wherein the image signal generated from an optically picked up image of a subject is converted into the digital information.

13. An image input method according to claim 10, wherein said encryption key comprises an encryption key based on one of a common key cryptosystem and a public key cryptosystem.

14. An encryption processing program stored in a computer-readable medium, comprising:

a step of converting an image signal into digital information;

a step of encrypting the digital information by using an encryption key; and

a step of erasing said encryption key after the digital

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information has been encrypted.

15. An image input apparatus comprising:
conversion means for converting an image signal into
digital information;
means for inputting an encryption key from an external
source; and
encryption means for encrypting the digital information
by using said encryption key.

16. An image input method comprising the steps of:
converting an image signal into digital information;
inputting an encryption key from an external source;
and
encrypting the digital information by using said
encryption key.

17. A recording medium attachable to and detachable
from an image processing apparatus for encrypting a digital
image signal, said recording medium comprising:

means for supplying to said image processing apparatus
an encryption key required for encrypting the digital image
signal; and

means for recording a decryption key corresponding to
said encryption key.

18. An image input apparatus comprising:
conversion means for converting an image signal into
digital information;
information encryption means for encrypting the digital
information by using an internal encryption key disposed
within said image input apparatus;
means for inputting from an external source an external
encryption key for encrypting said internal encryption key;
and
key encryption means for encrypting said internal
encryption key by using said external encryption key.

19. An image input apparatus according to claim 18,
wherein said internal encryption key comprises an encryption
key based on a common key cryptosystem, and said external
encryption key comprises an encryption key based on a public
key cryptosystem.

20. An image input method comprising the steps of:
converting an image signal into digital information;
encrypting the digital information by using an internal
encryption key disposed within said image input apparatus;
obtaining from an external source an external
encryption key for encrypting said internal encryption key;

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and

encrypting said internal encryption key by using said external encryption key.

21. A recording medium attachable to and detachable from an image processing apparatus for encrypting a digital image signal by using a first encryption key, and for encrypting said first encryption key by using a second encryption key, said recording medium comprising:

means for supplying said second encryption key to said image processing apparatus; and

means for recording a decryption key corresponding to said first encryption key.

22. An encryption processing program stored in a computer-readable medium, comprising:

a step of converting an image signal into digital information;

a step of encrypting the digital information by using an internal encryption key disposed within said image input apparatus;

a step of obtaining from an external source an external encryption key for encrypting said internal encryption key; and

a step of encrypting said internal encryption key by

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using said external encryption key.

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